

# BEYOND TERRORISM

## The sustainable security paradigm

A new report by the **OXFORD RESEARCH GROUP**, warns the current Western focus on the “war on terror,” is causing more insecurity and diverting attention and resources away from resolving more serious problems which threaten the future of humanity. Cooperative, international action of the world’s people is needed over the next five years to move away from violence to a sustainable security paradigm, to address climate change, competition over resources, marginalisation of most of the world’s people, and global militarisation. This article is a summary of the report.

An important new report by the Oxford Research Group, warns of the dangers of the current Western “War on Terror” and how it’s undermining the possibility of a sustainable future for humanity. *Global Responses to Global Threats: Sustainable Security for the 21st Century*, was published in June 2006. Its authors – Chris Abbott, Paul Rogers and John Sloboda – make the case that international terrorism is a relatively minor threat, compared to other more serious trends and current weak responses to these more serious trends are likely to increase rather than decrease risks of further terrorist attacks. So far the principal Western response has been military action with the resulting conflict and destruction in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. Increasing Western militarism will ultimately be counter-productive given the underlying causes of terrorism are not being addressed.

### Four root causes of conflict

The report offers an overview of four groups of increasingly interconnected factors as the root causes of conflict now and in the future. These are: climate change; competition over resources; marginalisation of the majority world; and global militarisation. The U.S.-led war, supposedly to crush terrorism, is only aggravating the causes that engender this terrorism. Instead, the report argues we need to move from a “control paradigm” to a “sustainable security paradigm.” Unless we realise the limitations of the former strategy we are doomed to blunder further into the deepening morass of international instability and violence. Terrorism remains a relatively minor threat to date in terms of lives lost and damage done. But terrorism will inevitably grow in reaction to the attempted militarist solution of this particular problem.

The “sustainable security paradigm” or strategy strongly endorsed by the report promotes sustainability, including

renewable energy, energy efficiency, conservation and recycling – in other words, utilising energy sources and materials, according to the best principles of ecological economics. Given the many daunting problems connected to the civil use of nuclear power, e.g. pollution, waste disposal, and above all the likelihood of nuclear weapons proliferation, nuclear power generation should be phased out altogether. It is certainly not a desirable option for the future, which could be made secure by adopting the principles of ecological economics and poverty reduction goals and by halting and reversing the development and proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

But to bring about the sustainable security paradigm, an unprecedented mobilisation of the world’s peoples is needed, stimulated by Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), the report notes. Its authors recognise that really meaningful and substantial change will only be driven from below. The present generation of official world leadership is much too set in its attitudes and ways to change without widespread, determined popular mobilisation. NGOs and the wider civil society need to apply intense pressure on decision-makers and one critical path must come through raising awareness of the close links between peace, development and environmental issues. Urgent, committed action is required in the next 5 to 10 years to avoid a highly unstable global system by the mid-21st century.

### The challenges ahead

The report takes a closer look at the causes of conflict and makes a number of pertinent observations. For instance, as the report notes, it’s highly ironic and significant that the Pentagon’s own Office of Net Assessment (ONA) has identified climate change as a threat which vastly eclipses that of terrorism. In a 2003 study, the ONA concluded that climate change over the next 20 years could result in a global catastrophe costing millions of lives in wars and natural disasters. As well, new climate prediction research by the UK Meteorological Office indicates expected shifts in rain patterns and temperatures over the next 50 years could put

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far more people at risk of hunger than previously thought. While Africa will be the most affected region in the years to come, China and India could also be greatly affected. The consequences of world climate change could be enormously destabilising for the global economy and its participants.

There is already competition for the world's remaining resources. As is very obvious today, "industrialised and industrialising states are increasingly dependent on imported resources, especially oil and gas." The world's fastest growing major economy, China, "increasingly needs to import oil from the Persian Gulf." Other mineral resources, and even renewable natural resources (including water), are undergoing greater demand too with dire prospects for future conflict.

The famous Club of Rome-sponsored study, "Limits to Growth" (1972) relied on computerised projections of trends into the future. While it elicited international discussion at the time, it was much derided by market economists who considered price signals would induce apparently endless creative innovation. Yet, although somewhat crudely construed as any path-finding study inevitably is, the original "Limits to Growth" (also repeatedly updated since) has worn surprisingly well. Certainly, its predictions are a lot more on the mark in the early 21st century than those of its critics. It predicted major problems after several decades – and we are now confronting them in the early 21st century.

The Oxford Research Group report points out that by the mid-20th century "most European states had become heavily dependent on imported raw materials, so much so that states in the Global South [i.e. Africa, South America, and Asia, ed.] became locked into the world economy as suppliers of low-cost primary products. In

the last 50 years even the United States has become a net importer of many primary products."

"This long-term international trend has been termed the 'resource shift' and is a key factor in the international political economy. On occasions, it leads to intense competition and even conflict – recent examples have included open conflict over cobalt in Zaire in the late 1970s, more recent conflict in the Great Lakes over tantalum supplies (used in mobile phones), and protracted conflict over diamonds in West Africa."

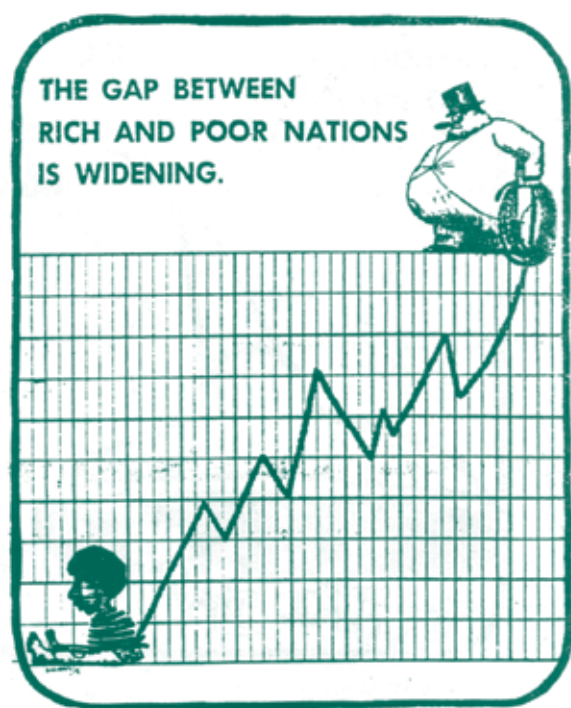
### Conditions for conflict

With marginalisation of the majority world, inequalities are deepening. "While overall global wealth has increased, the benefits of this economic growth have not been equally shared with a very heavy concentration of growth in relatively few parts of the world. These divisions are being exacerbated by increasing oppression and political exclusion." As the report says, we need to address the "underlying global socio-economic divisions the world is currently experiencing." Meantime, comparatively little resource is expended on the diseases and afflictions of poor people, e.g. HIV/AIDS, which UNICEF considers to be the worst catastrophe to have ever hit humans, at least in modern times.

"There is a clear and present danger in the world today: a complex interplay of discrimination, global poverty, majority world debt, infectious disease – the haves and the have-nots – global inequality and deepening socio-economic divisions that are key elements of global insecurity ... The majority world of Asia, Africa and Latin America are being marginalised as North America and Europe try to maintain their political, cultural, economic and military dominance." Eight hundred and fifteen million people in developing countries are suffering from acute hunger and each year 10 million people die of hunger and hunger-related diseases. Even in vastly rich countries there can be acute deprivation, e.g. in 2001 in the U.S. some 3,500 people died from malnutrition. Significantly enough, the political success of violent but socially effective groups such as Hizbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian territories is due in part to their provision of welfare to the local peoples of these areas. As the perceived driver of globalisation, the U.S. is seen as the main enemy by those resisting the globalisation process. In turn, American geopolitical militarism has only spawned terrorism more widely and intensively.

"Unfair international trade rules" prevent development in most of the South and foreign aid is often tied to donor country exports, loans, or the privatisation of

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public services. A huge debt burden oppresses a multitude of poor people. "Multinational corporations exploit the natural resources of many countries with little or no benefit to the local population and little concern for the social and environmental impacts of their actions." This process is mutually interactive with the maintenance of political elites who continually promote their own interests at the expense of the peoples they control. The international arms trade fosters continuing repression.

The report points to poverty and injustice causing violence and states: "This global trend remains unrecognised by most of the world's political elite." In turn, the "War on Terror" is distracting them from the fundamental causes of insecurity and the need to address global poverty and injustice has not made it onto the national security agenda of many, if not most countries.

### Weaponisation of the world

A principal concern of the report is the policy demonstrated by the U.S. in arms control, or rather dereliction of arms control. For example, the authors are very concerned about the U.S.'s lack of support for the highly sensitive 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). This Convention has no verification or inspection procedures built into it – it has no teeth as a treaty. In contrast, the more recent Chemical Weapons Convention (1997) does have such procedures. Genetic engineering and biotechnology present increasing threats and dangers in the development of new biological and toxin weapons, but the Bush Administration has continually subverted efforts to improve the biological weapons convention. Most notoriously, the U.S. Government has strongly opposed the principle of its own domestic biotechnology industries being open to international inspection.

Additionally, the U.S. continues to vitiate the principles of international arms control by developing a new generation of nuclear weapons. It is designing and testing nuclear weapons intended for penetration against deeply

buried and protected targets, e.g. command bunkers. A range of smaller nuclear weapons is being devised which will lower the threshold between conventional



and nuclear war. Coldly and deliberately nuclear weapons are being developed for fighting future wars. Militarisation is spreading globally as other countries follow in the wake of the control paradigm. The militarist search for security breeds mounting instability and insecurity.

### Towards a future worth living

In conclusion, the report makes a strong appeal for positive action. As it observes, in the context of worsening divisions between rich and poor, "the marginalised majority is increasingly likely to support political violence against the rich minorities of the world." The prevailing control paradigm, if allowed to continue into the future will mean such things as:

- greater efforts to control the Persian Gulf, leading to more conflicts;
- the promotion of technology and free markets to overcome climate change, widening inequalities;
- continued marginalisation of the majority world, coupled with indifference by the rich and powerful along with imposition of the "free" market and accompanying repression (or at least attempted repression) of developing and multiplying threats;
- more international terrorism caused by the control paradigm at work with a corresponding use of illegal measures like torture and further attacks on civil liberties and human rights;
- global militarisation with counter-proliferation measures focused on preventing WMD materials or capacity being acquired by terrorist groups and 'rogue states' considered to sponsor terrorism.
- More pre-emptive strikes are likely against alleged threats.

The control paradigm, in sum, reflects an overall failure to address the root causes of terrorism, and paradoxically, is causing increasing loss of control, and descent into chaos. The "current security orthodoxy is deeply flawed," and grossly counter-productive, the report's authors say. They make a special appeal for the support of journalists in helping to change the dominant outlook.

To replace the failed control paradigm, we need a new

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vision of the global future, a new paradigm/strategy – the “sustainable security paradigm,” directed at dealing constructively with climate change; competition over resources; marginalisation of the majority world; and global militarisation. Arguments and advocacy should be better directed, for example, increasing climate change and the Middle East conflict together make a very persuasive case for moving away from fossil fuels to renewable energy. The authorities and security forces would still need to deal forcefully with any terrorist dangers that might arise. But such security and military action would take place within a wider, comprehensive strategy aimed at positive solutions to the key world problems causing fundamental instability.

### Seeking and implementing real solutions

This comprehensive paradigm/strategy would incorporate, a sustainable energy policy reducing the need for fossil fuels and encourage the development of diversified, local renewable energy sources. Nuclear power would be firmly rejected.

Global systems of trade would be reformed, along with aid and debt relief in ways that genuinely benefit the poorest people. We also need to address legitimate demands of marginalised groups. Terrorism does not arise from a vacuum. To understand is the first step in seeking real solutions. At another level, we must take bold moves in nuclear weapons disarmament, and other weapons of mass destruction. Without demonstrated commitment by the more powerful states to disarmament, the prospects for peace are grim indeed. Basically, the new global approach aims to create conditions conducive for a far more positive, internationally co-operative and constructive world outlook. Co-operative international action is urgently needed. ■PE

■ The above is a summary by Dennis Small of the report *Global Responses to Global Threats: Sustainable Security for the 21st Century*, published by the Oxford Research Group. The authors are: Chris Abbott, a Research Officer at Oxford Research Group with an active background in the issues covered; Paul Roger, Professor of Peace Studies at the University of Bradford, a consultant to the Group, and the author of many books and studies; and John Sloboda, Executive Director of the Group and Professor of Psychology and Honorary Research Fellow in the School of International Relations, Politics and the Environment at Keele University. He co-founded and manages the Iraq Body Count project, which quickly became a key source of information about civilian casualties during the 2003 Iraq war and its aftermath [over 45,000 reported deaths in August 2006].

### Comment by Dennis Small

A major emphasis in the Oxford Research Group's report is the need for NGOs and civil society to apply huge pressure on decision-makers and a critical path must come through a closer linking of peace, development and environmental issues than has so far been recognised as essential by the majority of NGOs. Inspired by the studies and analyses of the Club of Rome, George Porter founded the Pacific Institute of Resource Management (PIRM) in 1984 to help chart a better future through positive measures linking peace, development and environmental issues. Under his leadership and related editorship of *Pacific World*, PIRM embarked on such a path in Aotearoa New Zealand. Kay Weir who worked with George from 1994, has carried on this work and pointed the way forward towards the sustainable security paradigm, – both in *Pacific World* and its successor *Pacific Ecologist*, thanks to the support of Edward Goldsmith, founding editor of *The Ecologist*, UK.

In dealing with the challenges presented for a liveable future, I believe this excellent Oxford Research Group report is somewhat soft in addressing the causes and reasons behind the control paradigm. There is a deep commitment in various quarters of the Western military and intelligence to the resource war strategy. Some quotes are apt here. The first is from George Kennan, Director of Policy Planning, U.S. State Department, 1948: “We have 50% of the world's wealth, but only 6.3% of its population ... In this situation we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will allow us to maintain this position of disparity ... We should cease to talk about the raising of living standards

and democratisation. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts.”

In the 1990s, former NATO commander, Sir James Eberle, declared that pacts like ANZUS [the pact joining the U.S., Australia and New Zealand, now lapsed] would: “serve as platforms for launching forces to ensure our access to key resources in the Third World in the growing struggle between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots,’” with the latter being outside the pale of civilisation altogether (*Listener*, 8/7/91, p.15). The U.S. desire to control the oil and gas resources of the Middle East and Central Asia is well documented, especially in the words of top planners, politicians and military and intelligence strategists. There is plenty of evidence showing the underlying resource war approach of late Western capitalism. At present, the covering ideology is still in terms of such buzz words as “freedom” and “democracy,” even though the reality is so obviously and hideously at variance with what is actually happening.

But globalisation is not just predatory Western capitalism any more. It's also the predatory state capitalism of China and a variety of other forms, driven by the imperatives of industrial economic growth. What we must assiduously guard against as we help expose reality is that language and values can become so degraded in the ongoing debates that a common consensus on any basic meaning breaks down and then linguistic engagement will fail in the contending strife, a prediction of Babel as in Dostoevsky's great novel *Crime and Punishment*. And the punishment will be for all humankind ... ■PE

■ Dennis Small is a member of Pacific Ecologist's advisory board.